

CLAIMS

1. A method of establishing a VPN tunnel through a wireless network, the method comprising the steps of:

passing identifying information associated with a wireless user to a VPN host network;

5 evaluating the identifying information by the VPN host network to obtain an access result; and

granting access to the wireless user on the wireless network based on the access result.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating comprises authenticating the
10 wireless user based on the identifying information associated with the wireless user, and
ascertaining whether the user is authorized to access at least one of the VPN host network and
the wireless network.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the identifying information comprises a conceptual
15 ID, user ID and password.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of passing identifying information to the
VPN host network comprises receiving by the wireless network the identifying information, and
transmitting by the wireless network at least a subset of the identifying information to the VPN
20 host network.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the identifying information comprises at least a
conceptual ID, user ID and password, and wherein the subset of the identifying information
comprises the user ID and password.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the conceptual ID is not encrypted when received by
the wireless network, and wherein the user ID and password are encrypted when received by the
wireless network, and wherein the wireless network does not decrypt the user ID and password
prior to transmitting the subset of the identifying information to the VPN host network.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of establishing a VPN tunnel between the VPN host network and the wireless network.

5 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the wireless network includes a wireless access point, and wherein the VPN tunnel is established between the VPN host network and the wireless access point.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising assigning, by the VPN host network, an IP address for use by the wireless user.

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10. The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of enabling the wireless user to access an established VPN tunnel with the VPN host network.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of establishing an encrypted session between the wireless user and the wireless network, and establishing a VPN tunnel between the wireless network and the VPN host network.

12. A wireless access point, comprising:
control logic configured to:
20 establish an encrypted session with a wireless user; and
establish a VPN tunnel to a VPN host network on behalf of the wireless user.

13. The wireless access point of claim 12, wherein the VPN tunnel to the VPN host network is an IP Sec tunnel, and wherein the encrypted session with the wireless user comprises encrypting packets to be passed over the wireless network.

14. The wireless access point of claim 12, further comprising means for enabling the VPN host network to assign a private IP address to the wireless user.

15. The wireless access point of claim 12, a switch fabric configured to interface network ports and wireless access ports, and a routing information base configured to enable the

control logic to route packets received at at least one of the network ports and wireless access ports to another of the network ports and wireless access ports.

5 16. The wireless access point of claim 12, wherein the wireless access point is an aggregation point.

10 17. The wireless access point of claim 12, wherein the control logic is configured to rely on the VPN host network for authentication and authorization services with respect to the wireless user.

18. The wireless access point of claim 12, wherein the control logic is configured to map traffic received over the wireless network from the wireless network user to the VPN tunnel.